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## Foreword /

## Archbishop Vincent Nichols



Photo – Marcin Mazur

This report describes the impact on families, parishes, schools and dioceses of a unique investment in a three-year, capacity-building, programme of family ministry in the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Delivered between 2008 and 2011 in 13 of our 22 dioceses, the funded projects have placed families, parishes and schools in a much stronger position to serve and strengthen marriage and family life in the future. We now have more trained volunteers delivering marriage preparation and parenting support so that family relationships can deepen and grow.

We also now have more trained volunteers offering listening and healing services so that those families fractured by loss and disquiet can be comforted and assisted to heal. We now have more celebrations of God's grace in family life, more awareness of the holiness of home lives and more commitment to family-friendly parishes so that our everyday and holyday experiences as Christians are more fully integrated.

The future of the Church as of society passes by way of the family. When we are in a stronger position to support marriage and family life, then we are in a stronger position to grow and thrive as a Church: the community gathered in God's name to break bread together, to offer thanks and praise to our Lord, to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to reach out in love and service to one another. All these things begin first in the family and are enabled to take root and flourish through the work of the home. Family ministry therefore, in a very real sense, strengthens the ground on which all other ministry takes root and flourishes.

We are deeply grateful to those whose generosity, dedication, time, talents and energy have made the achievements of these projects possible, both now and in the future. There is always more to do but we give deep thanks for all that has been achieved for families and for the church in England and Wales over the past three years.

## Intro /

## Bishop John Hine



Photo – Marcin Mazur

Ten years ago the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales was able to begin a more coordinated approach to supporting diocesan family ministry. There are those who rightly ask what a Bishops' Conference is for. One of our roles is to take responsibility for aspects of the Church's work that are too unwieldy or outside the scope of a single diocese, so that the Church is better enabled to be what we are called to be.

The Church's vision of family ministry is one where families reach out to one another, sharing the gifts of their life experiences and their faith and trust in God's abiding love and care for them. (cf FC) Family ministry at its simplest and best is a ministry where families walk alongside each other as supportive companions through all the ups and downs of marriage and family life, lending a hand, offering a listening ear, being hospitable, celebrating each other's joys and commiserating in each other's sorrows. In a very real sense, no-one else in the Church, ordained or lay, trained or professional, can replace this kind of down-to-earth practical and immediate and accessible ministry and nor should we try. But we can encourage family ministry, by naming it, enabling families to understand and claim it as part of their vocation, their participation in the life and mission of the church and by offering prayer, resources and formation so that it can flourish.

This report describes the ways in which some of the dioceses of England and Wales, those to whom the Bishops' Conference has been able to offer additional funding, have encouraged family ministry to flourish over a three year period starting in 2008. The goal of this programme was to enable dioceses to support parishes to become more family-sensitive, to raise awareness of the importance of family life as a spiritual journey and to consider how best to support parents and grandparents in passing on faith in God. These priorities were identified during the Bishops' year of listening to families in 2004.

These are the priorities established by the families who took part in that consultation. This is what families need from their Church.

It has been a great privilege therefore to have been able to observe the Church respond to these needs since 2004 and especially to have observed this capacity-building work as it has unfolded since 2008. The great and many achievements that this programme has enabled, illustrated in this report, are awe-inspiring.

The project teams involved are to be congratulated: those newly employed in these short-term part-time posts, those managing the projects and completing the regular reports on which this report is based and all those working alongside them in their dioceses who have supported them every step of the way. Of special mention are the many families who have taken part in these diocesan projects – over 12,000 of them – who have benefitted from the parenting programmes, marriage preparation programmes, listening trainings, Home is a Holy Place workshops, Celebrations of Marriage and Family Life, Healing Masses, bereavement trainings, awareness raising events, the list is endless.

So much of the impact of this work is yet to be realised. Seeds have been sown but much of the fruit is yet to come, as couples continue to be prepared for marriage in ways that would not have been possible before, as parents continue to benefit from the skills and support that enable them and their children to flourish, as parishes adopt new ways of welcoming and befriending and including those who may have felt marginalised. None of this great work could have taken place in this way without the generosity of a benefactor. We hope that the person who donated the funds which covered the financial costs of this work will be satisfied with how the money has been used and the extent to which it has benefitted marriage and family life across England and Wales.



## Executive Summary

Between 2008 and 2011 13 dioceses were funded to increase capacity for marriage and family life ministry in way best suited to the local Diocese needs but also with reference to the Bishops' priorities of developing family-friendly parishes, raising awareness of family spirituality and supporting parents and grandparents in passing on faith. This coordinated development is without parallel in the history of the Catholic Church in England and Wales and, so far as we are aware, in any other country of the world.

Eleven dioceses devised programmes that required the appointment of a part-time staff-member to achieve their strategic aims. Nine of these dioceses have successfully accomplished their objectives and five project workers have been retained in post, at least in the short-term. One diocese wished to increase the professional skills and competencies of their diocesan coordinator of family ministry, through a distance learning MA programme in Leadership. This led to an additional centrally-coordinated capacity-building project offering the same opportunity to other dioceses. Another diocese needed funding to pursue the development of an innovative resource for young adults to contemplate their relationship choices and behaviours, in order to prepare for responsible parenthood in the future. With publication 2012, Choose Life Choose Love is a timely resource for the Year of Faith.

### Short-term tangible outcomes in the dioceses that employed staff include at least:

- 46% of parishes and 26% of Catholic schools in those dioceses impacted by resource and training developments
- 5,534 participants in workshops, courses, study days and trainings
- 6,130 participants in diocesan celebrations, retreats and seminars
- 458 participants in strategic planning and delivery
- 400 parents to date supported through facilitated group programmes
- 140 trained listeners for parish family

- ministry
- 100 additional trained parenting group facilitators
- 50 new Marriage Preparation Providers
- 9 graduates from MA programme in Leadership for Family Ministry
- 5 more schools offering RAINBOWS to children affected by loss
- 3 more dioceses able to organise annual celebration of marriage and family life for the first time
- 1 Marriage Care centre reopened serving Ipswich and Colchester

Behind these statistics are a wealth of stories of personal and spiritual development, healing, inspiration, growth, development and empowerment.

The opportunity to focus on relationship skills of communication, conflict resolution and commitment has helped couples prepare for a lifetime together. The opportunity to think about why children behave as they do and how to respond with encouragement, active listening, choices and consequences has helped parents to feel more confident and less stressed. The opportunity to be welcomed 'as I am' has delivered solace and hope to the bereaved and those in mental distress. The investment in training, of parish volunteers and school staff, and in resources for a range of family ministries, has equipped and empowered local communities to be able to strengthen family relationships and to respond practically in times of particular need.

*"The fathers' course was excellent. Humour in abundance and some very valuable insights thrown in. Knock on effect: a sense of solidarity with men doing the dark and elusive art of fathering in parallel. Solidarity about its balance and tension with the reality of work, solidarity about how these may be managed both home and away."*

*"I think you can see a difference in the parish, with those 21 people being like 'yeast' in the dough – I hope we are becoming more of a listening community." "My children are both telling me they love me more often. The changes in my*

Continued

## Executive Summary

*behaviour and theirs have contributed to this...what more can I say!"*

For some of the dioceses involved this project was a ground-breaking opportunity, literally, to scratch the surface of family needs and consider how best to respond. For others, with more experience of delivering family ministry, but finite resources, funding enabled an extension of services and a sustained investment in infrastructure development.

With creative leaders now able to turn focussed attention to family ministry, the outcomes have included a range of innovative resources which will benefit the Church for years to come, such as Creative Ways of Being Church and Catholic Traditions Alive at Home.

Annual celebrations of marriage and family life now feature highly in more diocesan calendars, giving voice to the blessings with which God has graced family life and fostering greater awareness of the contribution of marriage and family life to the life and mission of the Church.

*"I am struck by the fact the church is adopting such a constructive approach to intimate personal relationships."  
"All the people seemed so happy to be there."*

*"A wonderful ceremony, it was truly a holy and memorable experience."*

Training delivered across the dioceses through the projects has ranged from accredited courses in Group Facilitation to non-accredited but respected courses in Listening, Marriage Preparation, Bereavement Support, Family Spirituality and Welcoming Ministry, to one-off workshops in volunteer recruitment, fundraising, film-making and new media. Each of these programmes means an investment has been made in local people's ability and enthusiasm to support each other where they are, which has benefitted them personally as well as the families they work with. Relationships have been made and developed and community networks strengthened.

*"I have got lots of ideas to take back to families in our parish."*

*"The more people feel supported and encouraged, the more confident they are at doing this most difficult of jobs."*

*"We were all - facilitators included - amazed at the changes so little time could bring to our family lives. We all noted major improvements."*

On a more strategic level, the diocesan leaders who have been involved in devising, refining, delivering, evaluating and adapting these programmes of family ministry have grown in experience, skills and confidence and are now significant resources for spreading the development of good practices in other dioceses. Those that have completed the MA programme in Leadership for Family Ministry and Faith Formation are now the foundation for a planned new programme of formation for volunteers in parish family ministry.

*"This course has changed my life, given me confidence, aided my thinking, added to my desire to do more and made me more effective at what I do for the Church. It is my hope that the on-going return on your investment in me will encourage you to invest as heavily in others who want to work hard to build up the Church."*

On a global level the Church in England and Wales now has a new body of practice-based literature detailing emerging good practices, challenges and solutions that will inform a generation of practitioners of family ministry nationally and internationally. We now have the tools, qualifications and experience to continue developing capacity for family ministry into the next generation. More importantly, the thousands of families who have been directly impacted by this work now know they have a Church that cares about their lives, believes in what they do and is on hand to support them through all their joys, sorrows, cares and hopes.

*"The future is looking brighter."*





## Background to the Celebrating Family Fund

In 2006 the Bishops launched Faith in the Future, a fundraising initiative to provide resources for 16 key areas of the Church's mission in England and Wales. The most ambitious single project itemised within the prospectus was Supporting Families, a coordinated response to the needs that families had expressed to the Church during the year-long enquiry: Listening 2004: My Family My Church. The 15,000 families that took part in this process pointed to specific and urgent needs in three particular areas:

- Welcoming, family-sensitive, friendly parishes
- Celebrating the home as a holy place
- Support and resources for passing on faith in God

Parish communities were identified as the primary place of welcome, understanding, and acceptance for families, and as the springboard for mutually supportive sharing of particular needs, gifts and experiences. Marital and family spirituality was identified as the heart of a true renewal of family life, yet, significantly, was a matter on which both Church and families lacked awareness. Parents and grandparents asked for help in passing on faith in God to their children and grandchildren.

The Supporting Families proposal aimed to assist dioceses in developing local support for marriage and family life in these three identified key areas, through providing:

- At national level – coordinated provision of resource development and dissemination, educational opportunities, information and materials;
- At diocesan level – provision of financial assistance to develop the necessary infrastructure to effectively implement this strategy.

Thanks to the generosity of donors, the Celebrating Family Fund was created to provide for both national coordination and local capacity building objectives.

In the autumn of 2007 dioceses were invited to apply for a maximum of £75,000 to be spent over three years to develop local work in the three key areas. The work had to be new, fully supported by the Diocesan Bishop, clearly meeting unmet needs, capacity building in terms of strengthening communities, developing local networks and encouraging families as leaders, sustainable if incomplete within three years and reflective of SMART principles – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.

Applicant dioceses had to agree to provide an annual progress report and welcome visits and support from the Marriage & Family Life Project Office staff at the Catholic Bishops' Conference.



## Grants Awarded

In January 2008 13 diocesan projects were awarded grants from the Fund, most of which needed to employ part-time staff in order to achieve their goals.

As one diocesan applicant expressed it "you can have the best resources in the world but without someone to demonstrate their effect they will stay on a shelf gathering dust."

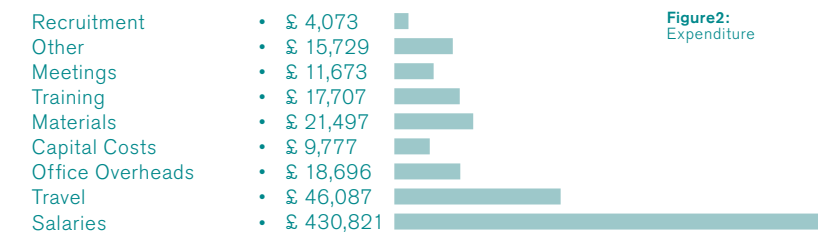
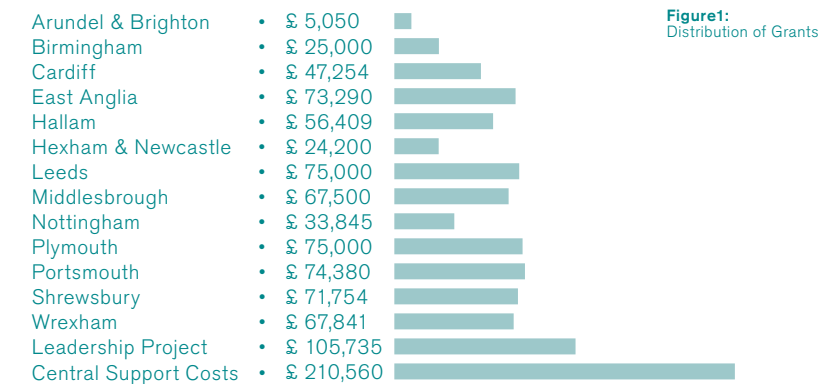
### Job specifications reflected a variety of diocesan priorities:

The need for basic coordination of diocesan family ministries, the need to develop support for parents and the need to address the themes of family-friendly parishes, family spirituality and family catechesis.

**Two funded projects were different:** one diocese requested a small grant to fund half the cost of leadership training and another requested a grant to develop a resource for young adults.

As well as these 13 diocesan projects the Fund has additionally paid for 10 diocesan staff members or volunteers to undertake a Master of Arts programme in Leadership for Family Ministry and Faith Formation, offered by Dominican University in Illinois through distance-learning, as well as the central costs of support, training, monitoring, reporting and administration incurred within the Marriage & Family Life Project Office at the Catholic Bishops' Conference.

For the projects employing staff 75% of the funds received were dedicated to salary costs, 8% to travel expenses, 4% to materials, 3% to office overheads, training and miscellaneous items, 2% to the costs of meetings and 1% to recruitment and capital expenditure.





## Summary of Funded Projects

Diocese	Project Summary	Anticipated Outcomes
Arundel & Brighton	50% of costs for MA in Leadership in Family Ministry and Faith Formation.	Diocesan FLM Coordinator with post graduate qualification.
Birmingham	Project to examine and share vision of what it is and means to be a parent.	230 youth and schools groups exploring reality and meaning of parenthood and personhood.
Cardiff	Employment of Parenting Support Officer specifically to enhance, improve and affirm parent-child interactions by strengthening the skills and confidence of parents within the archdiocese.	Direct delivery of 40 courses for parents through primary and secondary schools; recruitment and support of volunteer network to sustain this work for the future.
East Anglia	Employment of worker to develop support for parents, marriage and families with disabled children. Training costs for volunteer development.	Marriage Care trained network of marriage preparation facilitators; delivery of additional preparation courses in areas currently without provision. Launch of parent education programmes in two deaneries; trained group facilitators. Catechists trained for work with children and adults with learning difficulties and their families.
Hallam	Employment of staff member to take forward parent support building on existing experience of sustainability challenges.	Piloting of centralised provision of parenting support services to schools and parishes.
Hexham & Newcastle	Employment of co-worker to identify, train, equip and support volunteers to provide pastoral care for MFL in collaboration with their parish priests. Training costs for volunteer development.	Establishment of 18 local volunteer teams trained and equipped to provide marriage preparation and parenting courses and to organise local celebrations of marriage and family life.
Leeds	Employment of Family Support Worker to develop, train and equip network of volunteers to deliver parent support.	Creation of a sustainable network of 30 trained volunteer parent educators to reach 180 families per year and positively affect the lives of 1000 children within the diocese.
Middlesbrough	Employment of a part-time development worker to promote the three Celebrating Family initiatives.	Establishment of volunteer network to support MFL initiatives within dioceses; raised profile of national project work, provision of training and awareness events.
Nottingham	Employment of part-time worker to develop support for parents in praying with their children.	Creation of modular programme of support for family prayer lives. Increased parental confidence in praying. Growth of informal family networks.
Plymouth	Employment of part-time worker to develop support for MFL within diocese.	Creation of formal and informal MFL networks; identification of existing resources, strengths, needs; development of potential, sustainable strategies for diocesan support of marriage and family life.

## Summary of Funded Projects

Portsmouth	Employment of part-time worker to develop support for MFL within diocese.	Development of existing networks and Celebrating Family projects; provision of better coordinated diocesan support for marriage preparation & enrichment, bereavement support, celebrations, parenting programmes, mental health support.
Shrewsbury	Employment of development worker to deliver Everybody's Welcome & Home is a Holy Place within 20 & 26 Local Pastoral Areas, through developing networks & equipping volunteers.	Volunteer teams of marriage and family support workers in each of the 26 areas to strengthen existing experience in developing friendly, family sensitive and welcoming parishes and raising awareness of the graced, blessed, holy reality of marriage and family life.
Wrexham	Employment of support worker to develop a sustainable Marriage and Family Life Ministry for the diocese.	Stronger self-sustaining networks of trained volunteers to provide marriage and family life ministry in at least 50% of parishes.



## Snapshot of Project Achievements & Impacts

Across all projects at least 5534 places on training and development opportunities have been taken up and at least 6130 people have joined in diocesan celebrations of marriage and family life, other gatherings and meetings.

- In Cardiff, 13 parenting programmes have been delivered to 200 parents by the project worker, who has now qualified as a facilitator trainer. After further training in volunteer recruitment and support she has successfully recruited, trained and equipped a network of 17 volunteer facilitators who are now engaged in expanding and sustaining the parenting work. After taking a fundraising course Joanne remains in post on a month-by-month basis with the support of the diocese and a succession of small grants from a variety of sources.
- In East Anglia, 12 marriage preparation providers have been recruited and trained, enabling marriage preparation to be delivered for the first time in the Ipswich area of the diocese. Parenting programmes have been delivered in a number of schools and a facilitator training day held for 10 volunteers. Networks of support for couples and families have been developed and strengthened. A frugal approach to stewardship of the grant, coupled with staff changes, means work can continue until the end of 2013 by which time the diocese will have completed their sustainability strategic plan.
- In Hallam, an embedded approach to delivering parenting support was tested within a tightly-knit parish community undergoing structural changes. The project worker has been retained as a member of diocesan staff and project outcomes are informing future strategies for supporting parents across the diocese.
- In Hexham & Newcastle four deaneries now benefit from newly formed teams of volunteers offering pastoral care for marriage & family life.
- In Leeds 43 parenting group facilitators have been trained and accredited to Level 3 through the Open College Network. At least 250 parents have experienced parenting programmes as a result and at least 350 children have directly benefitted. Infrastructure to support this work in the longer term is being developed and the project is in a strong position to become self-sustaining, with the support of the diocese.
- In Middlesbrough, an exceptionally broad and energetic programme to develop families as leaders in their local communities has been delivered with over 2000 training and development places taken up focussing on listening skills, parenting group facilitation, marriage preparation, family-friendly parishes, family spirituality and passing on faith in God.
- In Plymouth, a more concentrated approach with fewer families has explored the obstacles to families' engagement with their local parish. As a result two innovative resources have been developed for supporting the religious practices of the home, the community life of the parish and for raising awareness of the holiness in the ordinary: Catholic Traditions Alive at Home and Creative Ways of Being Church. Additionally, ongoing support has been provided to families facing a range of challenges and diocesan celebrations of marriage have been initiated alongside retreats for those affected by marital breakdown.
- In Portsmouth, the opportunity to dedicate resources to the pastoral needs of couples and families has resulted in the strengthening of support to parents, couples, families with special needs, and families experiencing bereavement and domestic abuse. Over 600 training and development places have been taken up in the diocese during 2008-10 to build capacity for these initiatives and resources developed in support of family spirituality and of the bereavement support work.
- In Shrewsbury, almost every single parish in the diocese has been impacted in some way by a methodical strategy to raise awareness of family spirituality and a targeted focus on supporting families who have been bereaved or who suffer the effects of mental ill-health or domestic abuse.
- In Wrexham, the first year of work has seen a network of contacts developed in 70% of parishes and 12 volunteers recruited to deliver parenting support.



The following table illustrates the populations within which the 'outreach' projects – those employing staff – operate. The figures referring to the numbers of Catholics, including those attending Mass regularly, plus the numbers of parishes and schools in each diocese reflect the situation in 2008.

The direct responses row indicates the number of people who have directly participated and benefitted in some way from the project work. These figures vary according to the nature of the project and the target group.

## Statistical Impacts

	Cardiff	East Anglia	Hallam	Leeds	Middlesbrough
<b>Catholic Population</b>	82,021	98,000	59,964	148,751	87,729
<b>Mass Attendance</b>	17,376	23,000	13,404	32,905	16,473
<b>Parishes</b>	64	53	63	94	71
<b>Schools</b>	57	30	51	96	59
<b>Direct Responses</b>	228	1,060	1,149	339	3,195
<b>Parishes Impacted</b>	23	27	4	34	65
<b>Deanery/LPA's Impacted</b>	5	8	2	8	5
<b>Schools Impacted</b>	36	12	10	23	25

	Plymouth	Portsmouth	Shrewsbury	Wrexham	Totals
<b>Catholic Population</b>	64,534	217,000	195,824	40,000	993,823
<b>Mass Attendance</b>	16,500	37,909	33,429	7,600	198,596
<b>Parishes</b>	59	151	107	40	702
<b>Schools</b>	43	78	112	19	545
<b>Direct Responses</b>	1,966	1,921	1,499	762	12,119
<b>Parishes Impacted</b>	26	59	69	13	320
<b>Deanery/LPA's Impacted</b>	8	21	25	2	84
<b>Schools Impacted</b>	25	9	0	2	142

Figures from a single year.



## Families' Feedback

"The fathers' course was excellent. Humour in abundance and some very valuable insights thrown in. Knock on effect: a sense of solidarity with men doing the dark and elusive art of fathering in parallel. Solidarity about its balance and tension with the reality of work, solidarity about how these may be managed both home and away."

"I think you can see a difference in the parish, with those 21 people being like 'yeast' in the dough – I hope we are becoming more of a listening community."

"This is a huge shift from children being at the back 'seen and not heard' to enabling and allowing the families to take part in the liturgy – and to have a renewed liturgy of the word with children too, not as catechesis, but as an experience of liturgy."

"When we got married in the summer, our vows were really special because we had looked at them and thought about them on the Marriage Preparation course."

"The course had been so beneficial that I decided it would be good to be able to help others – so I went on the training course run by the Celebrating Family Project, so I can now help other mums and dads like me with parenting skills."

"Such a perfect day for sharing our marriage with so many other married couples. This was our first visit to Plymouth Cathedral and to have Bishop Christopher celebrating the Mass for us, plus of course the Choir and the music etc, gave to us and I am sure all the other partakers, a real day to treasure for the rest of our lives."

"I am struck by the fact the church is adopting such a constructive approach to intimate personal relationships."

"We have just had our new Confirmation Parents Group Curry Night. Deacon Geoffrey did a presentation on the "Home is a Holy Place" theme and gave out some of the 'Catholic Tradition Alive in the Home' cards. Wanted to let you know that your "little seeds" planted in previous visits

are growing! We all need some positive feedback!"

"Thank you so much for arranging for us to have an invitation to attend the Mass yesterday at St Bede's for the significant anniversaries. The welcome from everyone, having the photograph taken, the lovely and very special Mass, the renewing of our vows, the privilege of taking up the gifts to the Bishop, the special blessing that my husband was given by Father Dominic at Holy Communion, the beautiful flowers, the singing and the whole atmosphere will stay with us for a very long time. We both said that the day was as memorable, if not better, than our wedding day."

"To have a forum such as this programme in which our experience of parenting can be discussed in an open and non-judgemental way was very helpful. The course enabled me to reflect more deeply on my role as parent and helped me to evaluate my parenting style."

"We have made lots of great friends through the project and, having received the Sacrament of the Sick at each Mass, it has made a huge difference both spiritually and physically. Trust is the vital ingredient and it is abundant with everyone involved in the project."

"There is genuine kindness, friendliness, patience and respect for each other. There are also great opportunities to share experiences, our 'coping tips' and promises of prayers which truly brings us together as the Body of the Suffering Christ."

"None of us knew each other well before the course, but it seemed like an opportunity to do something positive which would support our family life. It's been amazing to be on track with my wife for the first time about how we bring up our kids."

"I thoroughly enjoyed delivering all the courses. Each one was different even though we covered many of the same topics. I felt it really strengthened my relationship with the parents who attended. We had very positive feedback

from the participants and definite friendships were forged."

"It was a very rewarding experience. When I started my husband asked me, 'Why are you going on that? Doesn't that mean you aren't a good parent?' I explained that it could enhance my relationship with my family. May I tell you that it does exactly that! I have learned that the way I speak to the children (and my husband) has an impact on how they react to me. Things are generally much calmer (we do have the odd blip – but don't all families!)"

"I really feel this course should be made available to all parents in the parish as part of the journey through life and faith."

"My husband and I were both able to attend...it (had) positive effects on a personal and spiritual level on our relationship...and of course on the children and family unit as a whole"

"The course is fantastic!"

"The future is looking brighter. I feel positive and reassured that other parents have a struggle with behaviour and children."

"I did feel that I was at my wit's end but I now feel that I'm not such a terrible mum after all. The group has been very supportive."

"I inherited my eight year old grandson when my daughter died in 2008, and I felt I needed to both refresh my knowledge and learn more about modern parenting as life has moved on significantly since I had been a parent myself."



## Project Profiles – Coordination of Family Ministry



Photo – Marcin Mazur

For the dioceses featured in this section, the funding has created opportunities to develop their ministry with families, some being able to undertake a coordinated approach for the first time.

Family ministry is a relatively new development in the Catholic Church. It was defined by the World Synod of Bishops in 1980 as “efforts made by the whole people of God through local communities, especially through the help of pastors and lay people devoted to pastoral work for families.” It includes “preparation for marriage; help given to married couples at all stages of married life; catechetical & liturgical programmes directed to the family; help given to childless couples, single-parent families, the widowed, separated and divorced and in particular to families and couples labouring under burdens ... which strain family stability.”

Since 1994 the Bishops of England and Wales have recognised the role of the diocesan coordinator of family ministry to be that of:

**1 – Caring for, supporting and promoting all areas of family life; offering pastoral support to all - clergy and laity - involved in the work of affirming marriage, family life and the parish family.**

**2 – Providing information and resources in family matters for all parishioners and clergy**

**3 – Organizing training opportunities and coordinating lay involvement**

**4 – Acting as a link with existing diocesan agencies to support families with a particular need**

**5 – Strengthening ecumenical links enabling cooperation with other Christian Churches at appropriate diocesan and parish level and where possible offering joint programmes.**

This is complex ministry with a broad remit, serving families at every stage and phase of their development, enabling them to fulfil their vocation to life and to love. It is slow work which in a fast-changing world, requires much clarity of thought and deep attention to the gospel and to the human person. It is a demanding ministry that strengthens the Church from the bottom up, through personal and relational development and adult religious formation.

“We have been given the task of building church communities that are more and more like families, able to reflect the beauty of the Trinity and to evangelize not only by word, but in the strength of living love.”  
Pope Benedict XVI. Address to the World Meeting of Families, Milan, June 2012.

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**Katrina Avery**  
 Pastoral Support Coordinator

“The on-going formation and spiritual nourishment provided by the course are critical resources for people in lay ministry; doing much to reinforce the collaborative nature of this work in the diocese.”

## Diocese of Arundel & Brighton MA in Leadership for Family Ministry and Faith Development

The Diocese of Arundel & Brighton received an award of £5050, comprising 50% of the tuition fees and residential costs of MA studies in Leadership for Family Ministry and Faith Formation offered by Dominican University, River Forest, Illinois, USA.

**Project Achievement:**  
 A theologically trained diocesan adviser for family life ministry.

The Diocese of Arundel & Brighton have employed a specialist adviser for family ministry for a number of years. In 2005 Liz James, a volunteer with Marriage Care, was appointed to the post. The funding enabled Liz to deepen her knowledge, understanding and skills for the role, through an online MA programme for leaders in family ministry.



Photo – Marcin Mazur

This enabled her to enhance her competencies and created a solid theological foundation for her work, deepening her understanding of lay leadership roles within the Church. The project concluded in 2009 when Liz graduated with a Certificate in Family Ministry and Faith Development.

The Project Manager subsequently reported that Liz “had been able to put into practice the fruits of her studies: contributing in Diocesan Pastoral team meetings with more assurance and confidence; preparing a session for married couples, at the request of Bishop Kieran Conry, to look at their on-going relationship; and leading a “Home is a Holy Place” event at the Diocesan Christian Education centre in Crawley in November 2008.”

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## Diocese of East Anglia Development of Marriage & Family Life Ministry

Fr Mark Hackeson  
 Bishop's Secretary

“The Project has built up the confidence of lay people to take on active roles in provision of pastoral support in their parishes and the wider Diocese. Thus our communities are strengthened and enabled to grow and prosper.”

**The Diocese of East Anglia received an award of £72,996 for the employment of a part time Marriage & Family Life Ministry coordinator to develop trained and equipped networks of volunteers to deliver on-going marriage preparation and parenting support.**

**Project Achievements:**

A co-ordinated approach to family ministry, a trained network of 12 Marriage Preparation Providers enabling the extension of Marriage Preparation services within the diocese; parenting programmes delivered in over a third of diocesan schools, plus the beginnings of a trained network of volunteer parenting programme facilitators.

providers under a strategy devised by the Marriage and Family Life Commission in collaboration with Marriage Care. Three years later 12 new trained volunteers are now attached to Marriage Care Centres across Suffolk and Norfolk, while the increase in personnel has enabled the re-opening of two Marriage Care centres in Suffolk which had been closed for several years. Bridie Collins, Head of Relationship Education at Marriage Care, described this as, “a very exciting development”. The Commission have also been able to direct energy to the creation of a Diocesan Policy for Marriage Preparation.

Parenting Support has also been extended across the diocese, because the Coordinator has had the time to maintain regular contact with the 30 Catholic schools in East Anglia, and to encourage and support delivery of parenting programmes in over a third of them.

Notre Dame High School in Norwich received the Investors in Families award in 2009, in part because of the parenting programmes on offer. However, because some parents found an eight week programme difficult to commit to, not least because of transport problems, the Coordinator developed a one-day 'intensive' parenting course which was offered as an alternative, drawing on her previous professional expertise.

This has been a welcome service-led development, with one parent commenting, “I was at my wit's end, but after attending the course I am already feeling that I'm not such a terrible mum after all.” With the assistance of the Family Caring Trust, the diocese hosted a more formal facilitator training event in 2011, attended by a good number of teaching and support staff. Some of those who took part are now running their own parenting programmes, further extending support for families across the diocese.

The diocese of East Anglia is amongst the most financially impoverished of Catholic dioceses in England and Wales and is further challenged by the geography of the region which makes diocesan work difficult and more than usually time-consuming.

This widespread diocese, like many others, has both isolated rural communities and highly populated economically deprived regional centres. Until funding became available the appointment of a dedicated worker to develop a coordinated programme of family ministry through the identification and training of parish and school-based volunteers was inconceivable.

The diocese had some very tangible goals to achieve as Mary Clark, a former health visitor, was appointed as Marriage and Family Life Ministry Coordinator in October 2008: “to break new ground in East Anglia, where a paucity of resources, both human and financial, had severely limited the development of pro-active ministry to support Marriage and Family Life”.

An audit of Marriage Preparation services early in the life of the project revealed that delivery was patchy across the diocese. The new Coordinator was tasked to manage the recruitment and training of new Marriage Preparation



Photo – Marcin Mazur



Photo – Marcin Mazur

Continued

## Diocese of East Anglia Development of Marriage & Family Life Ministry

In autumn 2011, Mary Clark retired and Edwina Griffin, a former parish administrator, was appointed as Coordinator. She continues to support the work of the Commission in a range of pastoral initiatives, including planning the Diocese's annual Marriage and Family Life Celebration. This is a hugely popular event which was attended by 300 people in 2011. The new Coordinator has also launched the Family Groups Movement in the diocese: a parish-based initiative which facilitates the development of supportive friendships among families based on the two great commandments. The first Family Group was launched in Halesworth in May 2012 and further groups are now in development in Ipswich and Norwich.

With a Diocesan Family Ministry Coordinator in post, diocesan families benefit not only from all these additional initiatives but also from a central contact-point for the dissemination of information and support on a range of family life issues, including domestic abuse, family spirituality, youth work and dementia awareness. Valuable links have been forged with other Diocesan Commissions so that a more 'joined-up' approach is now visible in pastoral strategic planning. Project Manager Fr Mark Hackeson estimates that the project has directly impacted 27 out of 64 parishes, over a third of diocesan schools, and more than 700 families.

The diocese is keen to build on the successes of the first three years and continue to offer a coordinated programme of pastoral support. The Commission is now looking at ways to raise additional funds so that the Coordinator role can be sustained beyond the initial grant funded period.

### Mollie and Kevin's Story

Mollie and Kevin have been married for 61 years and have five children. They have always celebrated their wedding anniversary with a Mass.

### Last year was a special anniversary: their Diamond Jubilee.

They were consequently particularly delighted to be able to attend the Diocesan Celebration at the cathedral, especially as Bishop Michael Evans was able to concelebrate. Mollie hopes that the commitment to marriage that she and Kevin have shown will be an example to the younger members of the family. They both see the public acknowledgement of this commitment as a wonderful witness to lifelong marriage and to family life. 18 members of Mollie and Kevin's family were able to attend the celebration, and the couple felt the love, respect and support of the whole family. Mollie said that such celebrations "are a must for witness to young people".





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## Diocese of Portsmouth Advisor for Marriage and Family Life

**Nicky Stevens**  
 Head of Department for Pastoral Formation

“The work of the Advisor is not only raising the profile of Marriage and Family Life, but is also affirming, supporting and encouraging people as they try to live faith-filled lives within marriages and families.”

**The Diocese of Portsmouth received an award of £74,380 to cover the costs of employing a part-time worker in order to support, develop and further initiatives in areas which had hitherto been uncoordinated and to ensure the strategic integration of support for Marriage and Family Life into the implementation of the diocesan Pastoral Plan, ‘Go Out and Bear Fruit’.**

**Project Achievements:**  
 The strengthening of existing networks and the provision of better coordinated diocesan support for marriage preparation & enrichment, bereavement support, marriage and family celebrations, parenting programmes and listening training.

The appointment of the Advisor in 2008 built on foundations that had already been laid by previous members of the Department for Pastoral Formation, and volunteers with whom they had worked. However, without the resources that a dedicated worker could bring to the task, the team had been unable to respond as comprehensively as they had wished to the needs surfaced during the Listening 2004 process in the diocese.



Photo – Marcin Mazur

During the first months in post the Advisor familiarised himself with diocesan structures, existing support for marriage and family life and with families' responses during Listening 2004. Key relationships were developed and the Home is a Holy Place and Everybody's Welcome resources introduced into a number of parishes and schools through work with senior citizens groups, parents groups, Mothers' Prayers groups, men's groups, Teams of Our Lady and Interchurch Families. Work began on developing support for marriage preparation providers and programmes of enrichment for married couples, in collaboration with volunteers already working in this area as well.

Responsibility for the diocesan bereavement support coordinating group was assumed and training in listening skills delivered. A diocesan celebration of Marriage and Family Life took place for the first time, celebrated by Bishop

Crispian Hollis and attended by over 500 people; “it was well received by the couples attending, their families and clergy, and was extremely effective as a form of outreach to many people throughout the diocese who would not normally be involved in events beyond (or even within) their parishes.”

In collaboration with the Diocesan Safeguarding Office a workshop to raise awareness of domestic abuse took place and, working with the Advisor for Stewardship, prayer resources integrating the themes of stewardship and family spirituality were created.

In the second year, progress was briefly disrupted by a change in personnel as Keith Chappell left to take up a doctoral research post and Katja Babei, a special needs teacher with a degree in theology was appointed to the role. Continuing the work on bereavement, training in listening skills was extended through the Acorn Christian Healing Foundation programme materials, parish bereavement services were audited and an online diocesan Bereavement Support Handbook developed.

A second annual celebration of marriage and family life took place in June 2010, again attracting over 500 participants. The profile of marriage was raised not only within the diocese, but much further afield through reports in the local press and on Meridian, the local TV news programme, which highlighted the thousands of years of married commitment present at the celebration. A number of the ‘Silver Anniversary’ couples commented on how inspiring and challenging they found it to be with those who had been married at least twice as long as they had.

A four session parenting programme ‘Rich Rewards’ was researched and developed during 2010 and delivered in various parts of the diocese during 2011 with very positive feedback: “We had a great time. We talked, learned and listened about how to be a good parent. I’ve learned a lot, and this could help me to improve my life in other areas,

Continued

## Diocese of Portsmouth Advisor for Marriage and Family Life

too." "To have a forum such as this programme in which our experience of parenting can be discussed in an open and non judgemental way was very helpful. The course enabled me to reflect more deeply on my role as parent and helped me to evaluate my parenting style." In collaboration with the Advisor for Youth Ministry, a 'Rich Rewards' programme for parents of teenagers has also been developed.

The Advisor for Marriage and Family Life has also been able to work alongside the diocesan Catholic Disability Fellowship to increase inclusion and support, playing an active part at their meetings and strengthening their relationship with the Department for Pastoral Formation. An awareness raising day is planned for 2012. All of these discrete projects have been delivered alongside core work of producing newsletters, directories, website materials and integrating a family perspective within the broader work in Pastoral Formation. The diocese hopes to renew the Advisor's contract for a further year to consolidate all these achievements.

### Paul's Story

After the death of Paul's mother-in-law, he and his wife received valuable support from his parish Bereavement Support Group. Paul subsequently completed a bereavement counselling training course and when he moved parish, decided that he wanted to set up a similar support group there. So he contacted the Advisor for Marriage & Family Life for advice. She invited him to attend a meeting of the

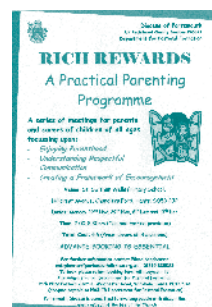


Photo – Marcin Mazur

Diocesan Bereavement and Loss Group, of which he became first a member and then the Chair. Katja helped Paul to identify and bring together some local people interested in setting up the parish Bereavement Support Group, and also facilitated an Acorn "Just Listen" course for them. Paul has subsequently helped to set up several parish-based support groups; he and his wife have contributed to the diocesan's online Bereavement Support Handbook, and helped to organise a diocesan day entitled, "Supporting the Bereaved in a Parish Setting."

Paul wrote in a letter of thanks that the Advisor had been, "an immense help as both a mentor and a guide" in enabling him to fulfil his calling to the Ministry of Consolation.



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## Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle Families Helping Families

**Peter Lavery**  
 Coordinator for Marriage & Family Life Ministry

“Deanery-based teams recruited during the course of the Project are encouraging their local communities to take this valuable ministry to heart, so that the on-going care of Marriage & Family Life is becoming embedded within the fabric of parish life.”

**The Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle received an award of £75,000 to employ a part-time worker to identify, train, equip and support teams of volunteers to provide pastoral care for marriage and family life in collaboration with their parish priests.**

**Project Achievements:**

The development of 4 deanery teams of volunteers to support clergy in delivering pastoral care of marriage and family life.

The Rt Rev Kevin Dunn, the former bishop of the diocese of Hexham & Newcastle, had the vision, arising from his visitations, of developing teams of volunteers in each deanery who could be trained and equipped to extend the provision of pastoral care for marriage & family life in collaboration with parish priests.

Funding enabled the diocese to employ a development worker specifically to identify and train volunteers in fostering family-friendly parishes, greater awareness of family spirituality, and developing support for parents in passing on faith in God.

The diocese encountered initial difficulties filling the post until in April 2009 Deacon David Westgarth was appointed as Marriage and Family Life Officer. He worked on the Project for a year before resigning to take up a full-time permanent post elsewhere. By this time sadly, Bishop Dunn had died and Deacon Peter Lavery, the volunteer project manager, had responsibility for a parish. Unable to dedicate the time necessary to steering the project further, the diocese took the decision to bring this work to a close in April 2010 at a total cost of £24,000.

During its short life the Project was successful in developing teams in five of the 18 deaneries of the diocese, in delivering 8 marriage preparation programmes and in recruiting 30-40 Marriage Preparation facilitators who continue to support clergy in the delivery of pastoral care of marriage and family life.

**Andrew's Story**

The Project Worker presented the "Home is a Holy Place" resource as part of a Newcastle high school's Enrichment Week in July 2009. The Project team subsequently received the following letter from Andrew, one of the organizers of the event: "Just a note to say thank you so much for the part you played in our recent spiritual growth mornings.

To judge from the feedback from our children, the mornings were very successful. And your input was crucial to that, pitched just right for the different groups of children, and making an important point about the true meaning of holiness as part of our everyday lives. As you know, it's not easy to speak to large groups of children, but you carried it off superbly - you looked as though you'd been doing it all your lives! Thank you."



Photo – John Smith



## Project Profiles – Parent Support Projects



Photo – Marcin Mazur

For the dioceses featured in this section, supporting parents as the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith was the priority when the funding opportunity arose. In Birmingham, Archbishop Vincent Nichols had a vision of encouraging young people to reflect more deeply about the implications of parenthood and the relationship choices they were making.

In Nottingham, Bishop Malcolm McMahon had a great desire to support parents in praying more confidently with their children. Both projects were funded with the expectation of new resources and strategies becoming available that would be of practical value across the wider church.

In Leeds, Hallam and Cardiff dioceses, the goals were to work directly to support parents develop their parenting skills.

The skills of respectful communication and effective discipline at home, of setting and reinforcing boundaries, of listening to and encouraging children, are all critical skills which have far-reaching impacts on the lives

and wellbeing of persons, families, neighbourhoods and parishes. These skills are also prerequisites for the Christian life of the home and for the transmission of faith in God. The bishops of England and Wales have a long-standing commitment to supporting parents so that loving, healthy relationships can flourish at home and spill over into parish, school and community settings.

Inexpensive and effective universal parenting materials have been used in a number of Catholic dioceses over the last 20 years with many very positive results. The main obstacle to their use has been a lack of confident volunteer facilitators. Funding has enabled the Archdiocese of Cardiff and the Dioceses of Hallam and Leeds to pilot different approaches to this challenge, resulting in significant and timely outcomes, bearing in mind that the Department of Education is currently engaged in similar work to increase access to universal parenting programmes.

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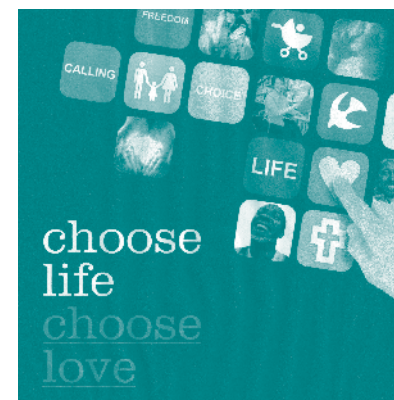
## Archdiocese of Birmingham Becoming a Parent

“It is a challenge to consider the importance of how to love well, choose wisely and build family.”

**The Archdiocese of Birmingham received an award of £25,000 towards the costs of developing a resource for young people (18-25) to explore the realities and the meaning of parenthood.**

**Project Achievements:** The publication of Choose Life, Choose Love, a catechetical resource for young adults in school, university and parish settings (due November 2012).

The support structures for marriage and family life in the Archdiocese of Birmingham are largely centred on parishes and 246 Catholic schools. Archbishop Vincent Nichols conceived of the 'Becoming a Parent' project while he was Archbishop of Birmingham. He was keen for the Church to initiate a conversation with 18-25 year olds to facilitate a deeper reflection on the Church's teaching on marriage and the vocation to parenthood.



Choose Life, Choose Love has been developed in collaboration with schools, parishes and the residents of a Young Offenders Institution. The first draft was piloted and revised during 2010 and 2011 in the light of feedback from young people, parents and teachers. In May 2012 Archbishop Vincent, Archbishop Bernard Longley and Bishop David McGough jointly expressed their desire for Choose Life, Choose Love to be seen as a practical interface with the Year of Faith – in recognition of how young adults live out their faith in their daily lives. It is hoped that Choose Life, Choose Love, along with a website offering support materials, will be ready for a joint launch in Westminster and Birmingham Archdioceses in spring 2013.

Photo – Marcin Mazur



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Anne Ballard  
Chair, Family Life Commission

“The Archdiocese now has a team of volunteers to sustain the provision of parenting support programmes in the future, under the direction of a fully trained and experienced leader.”

## Archdiocese of Cardiff Parent Support Project

**The Archdiocese of Cardiff received an award of £47,000 to employ a part-time Parenting Support Worker to strengthen the skills and confidence of parents across the diocese which includes the counties of Glamorgan, Gwent and Herefordshire, through the delivery of parenting programmes and the development of a volunteer network.**

**Project Achievements:** Direct delivery of 13 courses in diocesan primary and secondary schools; a qualified Archdiocesan parenting programme facilitator trainer; the recruitment and training of 14 volunteers to expand and sustain parenting support in the future.

The urgent need for the Church to affirm and support parents to “fulfil their vocation in today’s world” was identified as a priority during the diocesan ‘Listening 2004’ gathering and reinforced during a 2007 consultation day hosted by Archbishop Peter Smith when the opportunity for funding arose.

The Family Life Commission, appointed following a Diocesan Pastoral Congress in 1995, operates on a voluntary basis. Having had one unsuccessful attempt to develop a parenting network, the Commission jumped at the opportunity to employ a dedicated worker for this task.

Joanne White, a deanery volunteer who had been involved in the Listening 2004 process in the diocese, was appointed to the role of Parenting Support in June 2008. She received initial training from the Marriage & Family Life Ministry Coordinator in the Diocese of Shrewsbury and more locally from Barnardo’s.

Working closely with the Family Life Commission, the Vicar General and the Director for Religious Education, the initiative was publicised and parish priests and schools came forward to set up programme delivery. Despite working just two days a week, nine programmes for parents of children ages 5-15 were delivered in schools in the first eighteen

months of the Project and further courses for the parents of teenagers and of pre-school children were booked for 2011. Although some parents were initially sceptical, they welcomed the affirmation and encouragement they received in the course of the programmes. One mother wrote, “I am far from the perfect parent, if there is such a thing, but attending the Parenting Programme has made me realise that I am doing okay.”

In 2010 the Parenting Support worker successfully applied for funding to train two of her contacts locally with Care for the Family, in their ‘How to Drug-Proof Your Children’ programme. She has also been involved in raising awareness of domestic abuse issues through a series of presentations to diocesan clergy and through her involvement with a national safeguarding working party.

The Archdiocese recognised the importance of securing the future of parenting support and in 2011 the Parenting Support worker qualified as an accredited (City & Guilds) trainer, through the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTTLS) award. A volunteer recruitment campaign was then successfully launched, through which 17 parenting facilitators have been identified and trained in facilitating Family Caring Trust programmes.

Two of these volunteers have the qualifications, skills and experience to undergo additional training in 2012 so that the Archdiocese can benefit from a team of facilitator trainers, with further potential to extend services beyond the Archdiocese. With this expanding network and a developing contact list within local authorities, voluntary organisations, related charities and schools, there are now plans to engage more broadly in partnership work alongside Catholic school clusters to promote parenting programmes to over 10,000 parents, many of whom live in areas of social and economic deprivation.

Under the direction of Archbishop

Continued



Photo – Marcin Mazur

## Archdiocese of Cardiff Parent Support Project

George Stack, and with the development of the volunteer network, parenting programmes will gradually become more widely available across the seven deaneries of the Archdiocese. With the project funding coming to an end, the Parenting Support worker completed an online fundraising course during 2011.

A Fundraising Strategy Committee was then set up, through which several successful applications have been made. The Archbishop of Wales' Children's Fund made an award of £5000 in 2011, the Newport Catenian Circle adopted the Parenting Support Project as their named charity for 2012-2013 and the Archdiocesan Trustees covered six months running costs by dedicating the Christmas 2011 crib donations to the project.

Financial constraints mean that the Archdiocese will be unable to offer continued financial support after July 2012 but the Fundraising Strategy Committee is working hard to raise the necessary external funds to keep the Parenting Support worker in post.

This investment in personnel and training coupled with the support of key diocesan leaders, especially the Archbishop, is now reaping dividends in terms of opportunities for parents to receive the encouragement and support they so richly need and deserve.

As Project Manager, Anne Ballard writes: "As a small group of volunteers, we had been unable to sustain our early efforts to spread the work of the Family Caring Trust as we would have wished while undertaking and developing so many other aspects of our work. We are delighted that we now have a team of facilitators newly trained and ready to go."

### Beth's Story

Beth is a primary school head teacher in what she describes as a 'challenging area' with many families with specific support needs. Beth embraced the Parenting Support Project, having read about it in an email circulated by Joanne, and was particularly pleased when Clare decided to attend the course.

Clare's son had serious behavioural problems which neither the school nor Clare and her husband had been able to resolve. Over the six week course Clare talked openly to the other parents about the family's problems, and her shame and demoralisation. Any discipline she tried was ineffective and her son's increasingly challenging behaviour was becoming difficult to cope with.

It was suggested she try a different, active listening, approach which allowed her son more freedom of expression. After the programme had finished Joanne learned that Beth was keen to run another parenting support programme. She commented on the positive impact that the course had had on Clare and her son.

There were still concerns about the boy's behaviour, but communication was better with the family and the boy was much more inclined to talk about the problem. Beth had also observed that Clare had grown in confidence, both in her ability to work with teachers to address any issues and in her increasing involvement in the daily life of the school.





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## Diocese of Hallam Parent Support Project

**Susan Tym**  
Coordinator for Marriage & Family Life

“The parenting programmes which the Project has delivered acknowledge the messiness of family life and the sacrificial love parents have for their children. Parents are encouraged and offered skills to develop ‘good enough’ parenting and to celebrate effort and success in this area.”



Photo – Marcin Mazur

**The Diocese of Hallam received an award of £56,409 to employ a Parenting Skills Facilitator within the diocese’s Family Focus Office.**

**Project Achievements:** The testing of an embedded approach to delivery of parenting programmes; a qualified and experienced parenting facilitator trainer; delivery of parenting programmes to 65 parents.

The diocese of Hallam has been at the forefront of parenting support in the Catholic community for a number of years, having developed a nationally recognised Open College Network accredited training programme for parenting group facilitators. However staff changes and re-structuring meant that by 2007 only a handful of diocesan schools were still able to independently offer parenting programmes.

The Family Focus team were keen to explore other ways of embedding parenting support more firmly within the Catholic community. The Celebrating Family grant enabled them to place a dedicated project worker within a recently merged parish with three primary schools, to develop the relationships with staff and parents necessary to encourage and develop parenting support. The parish is in a former mining area affected by high levels of unemployment and deprivation and includes sizeable Polish and Traveller communities.

Laura Rendell was appointed as Parent Support Worker early in 2008 and began training as an accredited Group Facilitator and then as an accredited trainer through the City and Guilds programme Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTTLS). The first year was devoted to relationship building with staff and parents, which involved participating as fully as possible in the life of the schools including assemblies, parents’ evenings, coffee mornings and so forth. Mothers’ Prayers groups were initiated as a further means of engaging with and supporting parents. The head teachers of the three schools in the parish had voiced concerns for the children in their classes and a year later, one of those head teachers wrote, “It is comforting to be able to give parents real help. Parents have remarked how much they appreciated speaking and meeting with Laura and how much more able they feel to cope. It is such a tremendous bonus to be able to refer parents to someone who really can help.”

By the end of 2010 parenting programmes had been successfully delivered in the three primary schools and the remit was extended to two neighbouring deaneries. The job-title of the Parent Support Worker was redesignated as Parenting Skills Facilitator in order to clarify the limits of the role. The bonds created between participants on the parenting programmes have proved to be enduring and there has been a recognisable impact in that children are behaving better at home and subsequently in class, which has benefitted the whole community.

The dedication to building relationships of trust in the community particularly within the

first few months has been the project’s main success. The Parenting Skills Facilitator developed a credible profile, is trusted by local families and has an excellent track record for delivering empathetic and practical parenting programmes.

The diocese has found the necessary funds to extend her employment for an additional year and is actively exploring ways to sustain her role in the longer term. Having developed formal links with the Diocesan Schools Advisor (Primary), the project now has a forum to promote volunteer Facilitator training courses in schools to extend the provision of parenting support across the diocese.

Project Manager Susan Tym estimates that to date 65 families have been affected in a measurable way by the project and over 600 people have participated in parenting support events and celebrations.

### Charlie’s Story

Annemarie and Mark were unable to have their own children, so they adopted Charlie when he was three years old. He was lively and affectionate but occasionally suffered violent outbursts of anger, which worsened when he started school.

Annemarie and Mark didn’t want Charlie to be seen as different from the other children because he was adopted. They also needed reassurance that, in spite of their problems, they were good parents.

Annemarie attended a parenting programme and found that it affirmed her in her vocation as a mother, and offered her some new skills and approaches. Annemarie learned that she could help Charlie during his outbursts by ‘actively’ listening to him.

The implementation of these new approaches resulted in Charlie feeling more secure and his parents felt empowered in their ability to support him. Annemarie and Mark have now adopted another child, a two year old boy, who will be a very welcome brother for Charlie.



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**Breda Theakston**  
 Coordinator of Family Life Ministry

“This Project is of real relevance to all aspects of building the domestic church, and is of universal application and importance as it strives to meet our human hunger for the love of God that families themselves are designed to bear witness to ‘not in word or speech but in truth and action’ (1 John 3:18).”



Photo – Marcin Mazur

## Diocese of Leeds Parenting Support Project

**The Diocese of Leeds received an award of £75,000 to develop a network of trained volunteer facilitators to deliver parenting programmes so that capacity for supporting parents as first teachers of their children and as leaders in their communities could be extended.**

**Project Achievements:** The creation of a network of 43 accredited volunteer parenting facilitators embedded in their local communities with the capacity to reach at least 200 families per year, plus countless residual impacts on families and children in the course of developing this network.

The Diocese of Leeds has employed a Family Life Ministry Coordinator for many years, who has successfully developed marriage preparation programmes and networks of providers, amongst other achievements. The grant provided for the employment of additional staff, a Parent Support Worker and an Administrative Assistant, so that a carefully planned recruitment, training and accreditation programme for volunteer Parenting Facilitators could be delivered.

The rationale behind developing this network was threefold: it would enable the diocese to support families in their striving for happier family life, with more positive, respectful and loving relationships; it would respond to increasing political, social, scientific and cultural attention to the importance of good parenting as key to children's outcomes in all areas; it would support the objectives of developing family-friendly parishes, deepening family spirituality and supporting parents in passing on faith in God.

Three accredited Group Leadership Training programmes have been delivered as a result, in the North Leeds Deanery in Spring 2009, at Hinsley Hall, Leeds in Spring 2010 and in the Wakefield Deanery in Autumn 2011.

For each participant the training involved ten two-hour sessions in the classroom,

plus written work, delivery of a parenting programme and one-to-one tutorials. For the team involved, each training programme required at least 560 staff hours.

By selecting this approach the diocese was not only investing in up-skilling individuals through the training programme but guaranteeing that a minimum number of parenting programmes would be delivered. At least 200 parents and 311 children have benefitted directly to date from the training of the first 25 facilitators in 2009-10.

The impacts have been enormous. As Project Manager Breda Theakston reported at the end of 2009, “This works! People are hungry for this and flourish when fed. They thrive when affirmed, encouraged and supported. Touching people in one area of their lives (parenting) can have resounding, unexpected and wonderful consequences elsewhere, most of which we will never know. Two stories: a young mum, after just a few of the parenting sessions, started attending church and has brought her partner to start to prepare for marriage; three children have been brought for baptism through their mum's contact with a parenting course.”

The Project team have refined their recruitment process over the three years finding that Parenting Facilitators work more confidently in pairs and need the committed support of a nominator with responsibility and authority where the volunteers would be running parenting courses. They originally adopted the strategy of using a local high school as a recruitment and training hub, working with the feeder primary schools and their parishes to nominate volunteers. However, the most recent trainees were recruited after the Wakefield deanery invited the team in to train parents, parishioners, school governors, teaching assistants or social workers from all, but one, of the parishes and schools in the deanery. This approach has been much more effective and has enhanced the

Continued



Photo – Marcin Mazur

## Diocese of Leeds Parenting Support Project

development of community in a deanery which already worked extremely well together. 19 volunteers attended the part-time ten week course and 18 are on schedule to gain the OCN Level 3 qualification after completing delivery of programmes to parents.

Most pairs have launched or completed their parenting programmes already, engaging mums, dads, grandmothers, grandfathers, foster parents, adoptive parents and step parents from a variety of cultural backgrounds, all of whom are finding new community and confidence in shared values and love for their families. During the life of the Project the diocese has successfully realised its vision of starting to grow confident, capable, local parent leaders in the existing web of school and parish relationships and has seen many positive outcomes as a result.

Five mums have used the training to move on in their lives: one from home to an assistant's role in school; three from home and assistant work in school to further and higher education in early years' childcare and teaching qualification; one in English language and refugee residence status. A pregnant teenager from outside the Diocese joined a mixed age and mixed ethnic course and still maintains links with the people on the parenting course whose warmth and down to earth practicality encouraged and sustained her during a very difficult time (now happily mothering a lovely 2 year old!)

Because of staff sickness during 2009 which disrupted the timetable, this project will run until the end of 2012. The team hope to find additional funding to enable them to more fully assess the impact of the Project and to develop appropriate support to sustain all those trained as facilitators. In Project Manager, Breda Theakston's words, "I would like what we have done here to be a brighter light, a beacon, to help the whole of the Church and society to see parents for what they are: the first educators, the formers of future citizens and of future parents."

### Daria's Story

Daria wrote to the team in September 2011 to share her good news. "Several weeks ago, after 13 years in the insurance industry, I decided to take a dramatic step towards a change in career. I applied, via clearing, to universities and colleges. There were no places left but I managed to get on a foundation degree course: Children's Care, Learning & Development at Leeds City College. I am elated! It's a two year course and I can take a further year of study at university afterwards to achieve BA (HONS). Although I am involved with children at Church and am also a school governor, it was your Parenting Facilitator's training course that really inspired me to go further. I am also convinced that the evidence provided by my Parenting Folders coursework positively influenced the interview panel's decision. Thank you all so much."



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## Diocese of Nottingham Praying with Your Children at Home

**The Diocese of Nottingham received an award of £75,000 to develop support for parents in handing on faith in God and praying at home with their children.**

**Project Achievements:** The aim of the project was to support parents of children in the early years of childhood, bridging the gap between baptism and school, and providing support to young mothers to meet other Catholics. The diocese anticipated that success in this endeavour would provide a foundation for later work in schools and parishes within national programmes and programmes of catechesis. The need for the project was identified during a diocesan assembly in 2004 and in discussion between the Bishop and those whom he consults.

Susan Sanderson, a former lay school chaplain, was appointed as Project Leader in September 2008 under the direction of a Management Team including the Director of the Marriage and Family Life Commission and the diocesan Director of Education.

It was hoped to make contact with parents through sacramental programmes and parent and toddler groups and to work with parents in developing a bank of resources for use across the diocese. However despite a series of well-received newsletters publicising the initiative it quickly became clear that the greatest challenge would be in finding parents of young children with whom to work.

The nature of the diocese which covers the four counties of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire means some parishes are 80 - 100 miles from others. Many parishes ran Baptism programmes only intermittently and school or parish affiliated nurseries or toddler groups were few.

Three exploratory meetings took place in Leicester, Lincoln and Nottingham, where the Project Worker raised awareness of the Project's goals with the aim of identifying potential partners.

The prototype for 'Teddy Prayer Bear' bags for pre-school children was shared and there seemed to be some interest in these.

**After 12 months however it was evident that the project was not thriving:** early research-focussed objectives had not been met and little progress had been made in identifying or creating resources or developing networks.

Over the ensuing months the Management Team took a number of steps to address these underlying issues but the specific challenges of embedding the initiative proved too great, particularly for a part-time lone-worker trying to work across such a vast geographical area. When the project worker resigned in April 2010 the diocese took the decision to close the Project at a total cost of £33,845.



## Project Profiles – Responding to Families’ Expressed Needs



During 2004, to mark the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Year of the Family, the Bishops of England and Wales invited families to share with them their difficulties, joys and hopes, as families at home, in society and in the church.

Over the course of a year 15,000 families responded and their concerns were aired at a series of diocesan family listening days that took place across 19 of the 22 Catholic dioceses. The recurring themes around which there was consensus across all diocesan family listening days were the need to develop family-friendly parishes, raise awareness of the holiness of the love and service of the home and support parents and grandparents in passing on faith in God.

When the bishops conceived their Faith in the Future fundraising initiative, the Supporting Families element addressed the significant need for the substantial resources that would enable dioceses to properly respond to these priorities.

So it became a condition of diocesan applications for a share of the funds raised, that their project would very explicitly address one or more of the three 'Celebrating Family' themes: Everybody's Welcome, Home is a Holy Place and Passing on the Faith. The projects featured in this section represent those diocesan projects which focussed most explicitly and exclusively on these areas of national project work.

The national Celebrating Family strategy proposed a natural order in which the three areas would best be progressed. Everybody's Welcome addressed families' basic needs for a receptive, friendly parish in which they could be known and loved for who they are. Until those basic human needs could be met, families might be less receptive to an exploration of the innate holiness in their lives of love and care for one another.

This caution has been affirmed in anecdotal evidence of resistance to the idea that Home is a Holy Place since there is a strong sense that to be holy must mean to be perfect, and families often struggle with a sense of inadequacy.

It was envisaged that work on supporting families in transmitting faith would flow much more easily if they already felt part of the parish community and could see their extraordinary family lives as having meaning and value in the life and mission of the wider church.

What has been realised through the work of the dioceses who have dedicated their project work to the pursuit of Everybody's Welcome, Home is a Holy Place and Passing on the Faith is that these themes relate to each other in a more dynamic than a linear fashion.

These dioceses have taken a variety of routes through the themes, but no matter which theme has been the starting point, it has led to work on the other two themes. In a very real sense, what was realised during the Listening 2004 process as immediate family needs, has now, as a result of these funded projects, been confirmed as the continuing work of the Church in support of marriage and family life.





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## Diocese of Middlesbrough Celebrating Family Project Worker

Jane Cook  
Adult Formation Adviser

“The project has increased support by radically raising awareness of marriage & family life issues throughout the Diocese. It has made people aware of how small things count, such as small changes in welcome, facilities and affirmation, which all go a long way to helping families.”

**The Diocese of Middlesbrough received an award of £67,000 to promote the ethos and themes of ‘Celebrating Family’ across the whole diocese, based on a three-year rolling programme of parish-based workshops, and follow-up meetings, identifying and addressing formation needs and raising awareness of marriage and family life issues.**

**Project Achievements:** The provision of a broad programme of training and events, the development of volunteer networks and the strengthening of relationships between those in homes, parishes and schools. Over 2000 places on workshops, courses, retreats and study days were taken up over the three years of this project.

The grant enabled the Diocese of Middlesbrough to employ a dedicated ‘Celebrating Family’ Project Worker so that a coordinated response to needs identified in the diocese during the Listening 2004 process could be developed. Caroline Dollard, an experienced leader in adult Christian formation, liturgist and catechetical coordinator was appointed in October 2008.



Photo – Marcin Mazur

During the first year a rolling programme of parish-based workshops and follow up meetings was devised to identify formation needs and to raise the profile of marriage and family life ministry in the diocese. Six regional meetings introducing resources for developing family-friendly parishes were followed up with 15 deanery and parish-based workshops and additional one-to-one meetings with other parishes. 66% of parishes engaged with the project at this stage and a network of 62 parish-based family life contacts was developed. The project worker qualified as a trainer in listening skills and in parenting facilitation in order to address additional needs that were beginning to surface.

The second year focus on family spirituality began with a launch by Bishop Terry Draine in September 2009 at

a Diocesan Family Day. A diocesan celebration of marriage and family life took place on the Feast of the Holy Family on December 27th, 2009 at St Mary’s Cathedral and in the spring three regional workshops introducing the Home is a Holy Place resource pack took place.

Two ‘Acorn’ Listening trainings were delivered after Easter to parishioners preparing to be involved in pastoral care and bereavement support. Parenting programmes were delivered in three more locations and Group Leadership training for volunteer facilitators took place in April. One of those trained was Lynne, a Family Liaison Officer in a primary school on Teeside: “Over the past year I have worked with over 30 parents. It has been so rewarding to see how much they have benefitted and of course their children.

The parents come to the first meeting a bit daunted but very quickly gel as a group and find strength in each other. Their discussions are lively, perhaps even heated but we always learn something new. The premise of gentle-love and firm-love that runs throughout is a hard-hitting message that really has changed families’ lives. Some of the parents have repeated the course two or three times. It is helping to create community. Two of the parents have gone on to use the programme in their own places of work, one working with women experiencing domestic violence, the other working with young single parents.”

The third year was launched with a Diocesan Study day on the theme of families as domestic churches called ‘Households of God’, again in the presence of Bishop Draine. The focus this year was on supporting parents and grandparents in passing on faith in God. The project worker participated in a national research project called Partners in a Shared Task, piloting a series of small-scale conversations around the diocese between parents, grandparents, teachers, head teachers, catechists and priests to look at the roles and responsibilities of passing on faith in

Continued

## Diocese of Middlesbrough Celebrating Family Project Worker



Photo – Marcin Mazur

God to the next generation. This activity generated a wave of enthusiasm for collaborative working and as a result many parish-home-school networks were developed and strengthened. The project worker also trained as a Registered Director for Rainbows, a peer-support programme for children affected by the loss of a parent and introduced the programme to four schools in the diocese.

The work funded in Middlesbrough diocese has encouraged small but meaningful changes in the welcome and affirmation of families. Seeds have been sown for the development of home/school/parish links which encourage genuine collaboration between diocesan departments, schools, parishes, and parents. Through shared worship, prayer, retreat experiences and workshops, communities are now more aware of the needs of families and their responsibilities towards them. There has been considerable involvement of couples and families in the Project, and their growth as community leaders has inspired the development of several independent parish initiatives.

**It is estimated that the Project has had a tangible impact on 65 parishes in 5 deaneries, and in 25 schools, affecting the lives of nearly 400 families.**

A strategic plan for the future of Family Life Ministry was presented to the bishop in October 2011. Unfortunately the present economic climate has prevented the diocese from continuing to employ someone to drive the coordination of training and pastoral care for families. The project worker remains in post for 5 hours a week until June 2012 to continue supporting volunteers and deliver additional support for faith transmission.

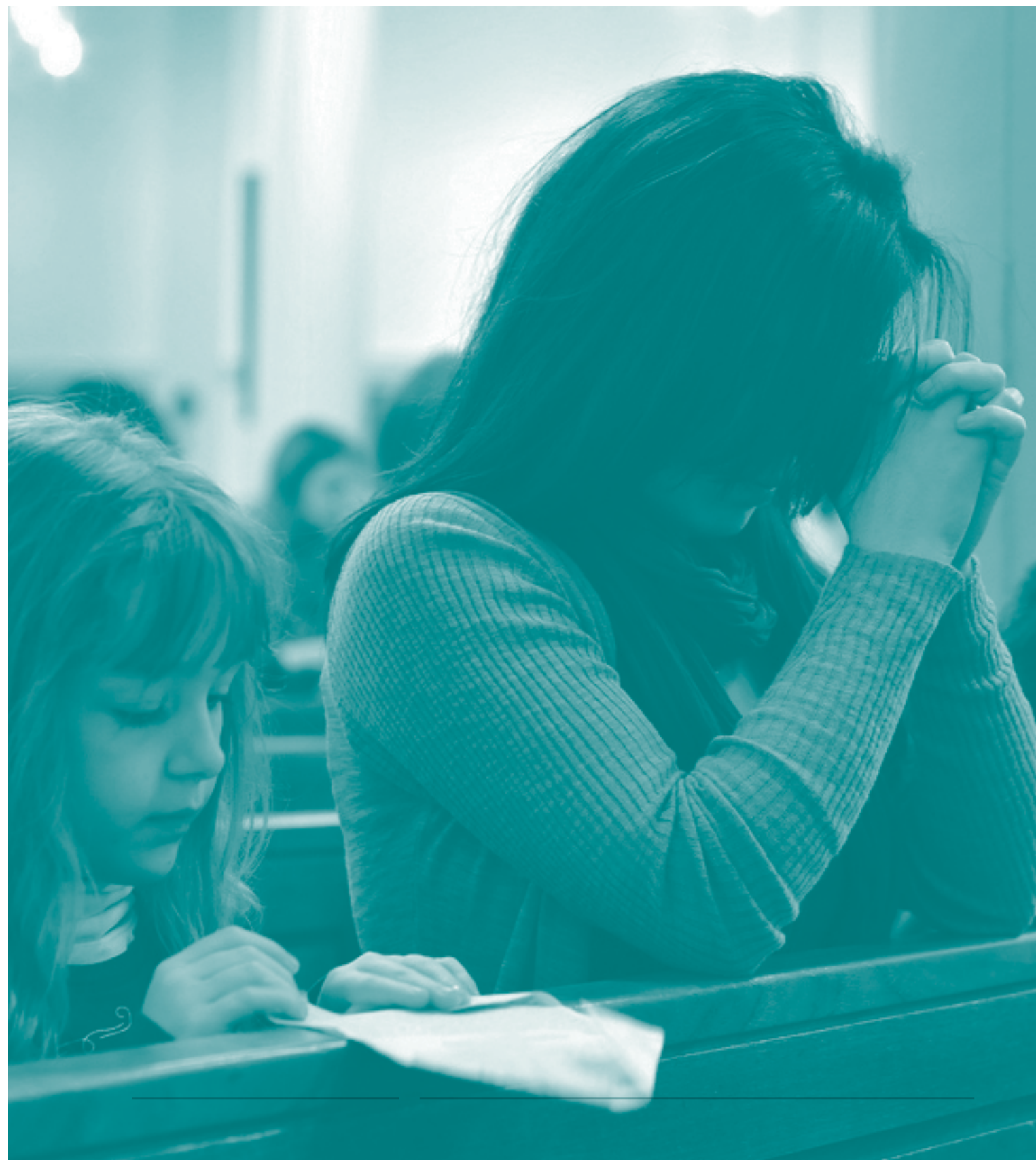
### Child T's Story

'Rainbows' provides an emotionally safe, structured environment for children, young people and adults to grieve a significant loss in their lives.

The Project Worker undertook a three-day intensive training, and qualified as a 'Regional Director' (ie development worker) for Rainbows GB. In collaboration with the Vicariate for Evangelisation & Catechesis/Diocesan Education Department, the project worker now offers training for whole school staffs to support vulnerable, grieving children in schools and parishes.

The loss can be through death, separation, divorce, imprisonment, or significant change in circumstances for the child. Head teacher's feedback: "I couldn't imagine our school without Rainbows now – it has been a wonderful means of supporting the children in our school who have had very difficult experiences in their lives.

Thanks to the Rainbows training, all the staff are now confident in listening to the children, and reassuring them that the feelings they have are totally normal, and that the Rainbows groups are there to give them a safe place to talk about these feelings. We really feel we are supporting our families in their difficulties – as we should be as a Catholic school!" Parent's feedback: "Rainbows has made a huge difference to our family life. Our son is much happier now and coping well with his dad being in prison. I can talk to him more about it too. It's been hard, it IS hard, but I feel so supported." ChildT. (year 8): "it helped me get my confidence back in myself... the sadness I go through, other people feel the same way I do, so it makes me feel more confident".



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David Wells  
Director for Adult Formation.

“The principle challenge remains a perceived gulf between the experience of families and the expectations of Church. It is right therefore, that as the project reaches a certain maturity, the project worker finds herself working most effectively with small groups of seemingly curious but detached families who regard themselves at the periphery of whatever it means to be part of the ‘faithful’.”



Photo – Marcin Mazur

## Diocese of Plymouth Celebrating Family Project Worker

**The Diocese of Plymouth was awarded a grant of £75,000 to enable a coherent strategic response to the Celebrating Family themes, promoting “an understanding of the domestic church as an arena in which much of our witness as Christians is expressed, enjoyed, tested and lived out.”**

**Project Achievements:** The creation of new resources for family faith development and community building; strengthening of home/school/parish networks; support for family-friendly parishes, family spirituality and passing on faith in God; specific initiatives in support of marriage and for the pastoral care of divorced and separated Catholics.

The Diocese of Plymouth had been unable to follow up on the needs expressed by local families during the Listening 2004 process when it had become apparent that families were looking for stronger, more cohesive parish communities and support in passing on faith.

The Celebrating Family grant enabled the diocese to appoint a dedicated Marriage & Family Life development worker for the very first time, to look into these needs, identify any additional issues and devise workable strategies for responding. Jillian Wilce, an MA student in Pastoral Theology, took up the post in August 2008 having had experience in parish family ministry.

In addition to documenting the provision of existing diocesan family support services, a key project goal was to help families recognise the sacramental dimension of their home lives.

The project's initial research using the nationally produced resource 'Home is a Holy Place' suggested that additional resources would be important to enable families to engage with the themes in different ways and to overcome obstacles to a sense of 'belonging' in the Church. As the project worker

reported: “What has struck me over the past 15 months is the poverty of community our families tolerate. What is on offer often attracts the ‘usual suspects’ who turn up to everything, and thus there is a need to offer something attractive to those on the periphery of active parish life.”

Working with a group of parishioners, alternative opportunities for gathering families together were explored with accompanying activities to communicate the sacredness in the ordinary. The result, Creative Ways of Being Church, contains 45 suggestions for parish based family encounters, each accompanied by practical planning tips, scripture, prayers and reflections.

The resource was specifically designed to strengthen the links between the parish community and family life and is applicable in any home or parish setting. It has been extremely well received by diocesan clergy and laity and is now in use in other dioceses.

The project has also seen the development of an innovative resource for deepening the Catholicity of family homes and supporting the growth of family prayer and rituals. Catholic Tradition Alive at Home is a series of recipe cards which explain traditional Catholic faith practices, such as house blessings and signing the cross and provide simple instructions and suggestions for further use, even in very busy homes.

These have proved very popular and are also now used in dioceses throughout the country. In the final year of the project a four-session programme called Families in Faith was devised as a vehicle for exploring the role and responsibility of parents and grandparents in passing on faith in God and their consequent support needs.

With a dedicated project worker, the diocese has also been able to inaugurate an annual celebration of marriage and to host a “Big Marriage

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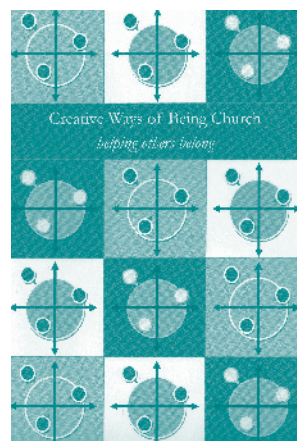


Photo – Marcin Mazur

## Diocese of Plymouth Celebrating Family Project Worker

Conference", which, in December 2010 gave laity and clergy the opportunity to share good practice in marriage preparation and enrichment and to discuss current and emerging marriage initiatives. Subsequently an innovative format for a weekend retreat was developed and successfully delivered to people who had experienced the loss of a spouse through bereavement, divorce and separation.

Requests from parishes, schools and parent groups for workshops and input have been met and families facing sudden moments of crisis have had somewhere to turn to for information and advice. The clergy of the diocese have been involved in contributing stories of their own journey as priests to two 'My Family My Priesthood' events which aimed to explore the role of families in nurturing and sustaining priestly vocations.

The project has already been extended for a year thanks to a grant from the Catholic Children's Society in the diocese. Once that grant period ends in August 2012 it is unlikely that funds will be available to sustain this work, despite the creation of a fundraising strategy team. The concern is that family ministry will not continue to flourish in the diocese without a designated member of staff to raise awareness of the pressing issues and identify resources to address them.

**It is estimated that 26 parishes in 8 deaneries have benefitted in a tangible way from the Project and 25 schools and nearly 300 people have also been directly impacted.**

### Francine's story

Francine is the mother of 2 teenage sons age 14 and 16. She attended the Families in Faith programme because she was concerned about their faith lives. "I'd love to be able to pass on some faith but I don't know quite how you do it – that's why I came here.

I tell my sons that because they were born into a Catholic family they were born with the gift of faith but it's up to them to use it, and nurture it, and develop it. They are averse to coming to Church but not averse to living a Catholic life and being good people.

Our gatherings have really helped me. I was struggling thinking I hadn't done enough for them and that they were drifting because I hadn't guided them enough. I came looking for ideas, some support and to see what other people are doing. It's helped me enormously. It's helped me to realise that there is a lot more faith at home than I had appreciated. It's made me think that there is just so much more to my faith than coming to Church.

I don't worry so much about them not being here though we've talked about it and they know how I feel. They listen to me now. So they have heard a little message and that's good, a seed for the future. It's given me a focus to keep talking to them about faith in God. Otherwise perhaps the conversation would have closed down altogether."





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Clara Donnelly  
Marriage & Family Life Ministry Coordinator

“The Project has highlighted a need for greater compassion and understanding in parish communities and parishes have been inspired to more openness and honesty in their communities as a result.”



Photo – Marcin Mazur

## Diocese of Shrewsbury Establishing a Life-Changing Focus in Every Family in the Diocese

**The Diocese of Shrewsbury received an award of £71,000 to encourage parishes to develop a more welcoming and sensitive attitude towards all parishioners, to affirm the holiness of the family and to help families recognise the presence of God in the ups and downs of family life.**

**Project Achievements:** Diocesan-wide engagement with the “Home is a Holy Place” initiative; the strengthening of friendly, family-sensitive parishes and the launch of a diocesan mental health strategy including the introduction of dedicated healing masses and awareness-raising days across the diocese attended by over 700 people.

For the past 12 years Shrewsbury diocese has employed a part-time Marriage & Family Life Ministry Coordinator who has worked with the Diocesan Commission for Marriage & Family Life, chaired by the Episcopal Vicar for Marriage & Family Life to deliver a full programme of marriage preparation, parenting support, care of the separated and divorced and marriage enrichment.

Without additional staff the diocese was unable to fully respond to the findings of the Listening 2004 consultation and meet local families' expressed needs for a greater sense of inclusion in parish life or to raise awareness of family spirituality.

The grant enabled the diocese to appoint a part-time development worker, Helen Bassirat, formerly a parish administrator, who initiated a diocesan-wide introduction of the “Home is a Holy Place” resource.

Over the course of a year the resource was methodically launched in almost every Local Pastoral Area, directly engaging nearly 450 parishioners through workshops and other awareness-raising days and parish-based initiatives. The impact of this work was almost too massive to manage, with every event producing a number of additional needs and

invitations to respond to and follow up. In one parish groups of parents began to come together after the school ‘drop off’ to talk about family spirituality.

In another, the creation of Home Groups provided parents with a forum for faith sharing and family stories. This, along with a series of “Home is a Holy Place” events during Lent, inspired many moving personal testimonies:

“I find it inspiring and encouraging to know that all the millions of things I do for my children is a form of serving.”

“It reinforced my belief that God is present in all things at all times in the way that families work together through difficulties and hardships.”

“It has given an increased sense of the worth of mundane household tasks which are undervalued by society.”

“I had never thought of my provision for my children, which I take seriously, as holy”.

After a presentation on Home is a Holy Place to an in-service training day for a cluster of Catholic primary schools, the Assistant Diocesan Director of School wrote: “The day was seen as being of great value and would certainly be reflected upon in schools. Every teacher in that room is dedicated to the well-being of the children in their care and your presentation reminded them of the privilege and responsibility which is theirs.

It also served as a reminder to us all that home really is ‘a holy place’ and that God is deeply present in the so called ‘ordinariness’ of life.”

Learning from this experience, work on the “Everybody’s Welcome” initiative planned for year 2, followed a much more strategic trajectory. Using the nationally developed resources, “What is Life Like” (for families facing particular challenges) and the CEDAR Resource (for Catholics Experiencing

Continued

## Diocese of Shrewsbury Establishing a Life-Changing Focus in Every Family in the Diocese



Photo – Marcin Mazur

Domestic Abuse), a series of smaller scale activities were initiated to support families experiencing mental health problems, bereavement or the effects of domestic abuse.

Helen's efforts on behalf of the Mental Health Action Group, to raise awareness of mental health issues, were warmly welcomed in the diocese and according to Project Manager Clara Donnelly, "gave many parishioners and clergy the courage to speak out about their difficulties and seek support from the Church in an unprecedented way".

An exploratory day at St Vincent's, Knutsford, in 2009 heralded the start of the Diocese's pioneering work on mental health support and was followed by the Diocese's first healing mass for families affected by mental health issues.

13 dedicated healing masses and three more diocesan awareness-raising days followed, attended by over 700 people. The Celebrating Family funded project concluded in June 2011, though the diocese received an additional small grant from the Bishops' Day For Life Fund to extend the mental health work.

The majority of the 107 parishes in the diocese have been impacted in a tangible way by the introduction and adoption of the "Everybody's Welcome" and "Home is a Holy Place" initiatives. 69 of those parishes continue to benefit from this work as the Project's legacy is the increased awareness of the complex needs of families and the on-going necessity for sensitive and compassionate pastoral care in parishes.

### Maddie's Story

In July 2011, for a period of six weeks, the resource materials of "Home is a Holy Place" were presented to a small group of parents in a parish of the Shrewsbury diocese.

Maddie, the mother of three children aged between 5 and 11, all with additional educational needs, was one of those in attendance. Maddie enjoyed the support and encouragement she received at the sessions and responded positively to the revelation that God was present in the many long, dark nights she experienced. She spoke movingly of the difference that awareness of being "called" to the vocation of motherhood had made to her life.

The "Home is a Holy Place" resource helped her to see her life in a different way and as a result of the discussion group she felt genuinely supported. Maddie is currently helping to set up a new "Home is a Holy Place" discussion group and is convening a support group for local parents of children with special or additional needs. She is a member of the Parish Baptism team and a Confirmation Catechist.



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## Diocese of Wrexham Establishing a Sustainable Family Life Ministry

**Tony Ellis**  
 Chair, Marriage and Family Life Commission

“In this first Project year we have developed a contact strategy and plan which has enabled the MFL Commission to have contacts in 70% of the diocese – a major achievement!”

**The Diocese of Wrexham received an award of £67,500 to recruit, train and sustain teams of volunteers in parishes for the provision of marriage and family life ministry, particularly developing family-friendly parishes, raising awareness of family spirituality and supporting parents and grandparents in passing on faith in God.**

In the autumn of 2011, 12 volunteer parenting facilitators received Initial Training from the Family Caring Trust, with parenting programmes planned for delivery in 2012. The annual Advent Family Fun day was also supported by the Development Worker, and attracted over 100 children, parents and grandparents.

**Project Achievements:**  
 The appointment of a development worker, the creation of a dedicated MFL diocesan website, the training of 12 Parenting Support Facilitators, the compilation of a parish/school resource pack and good progress on the development of a volunteer network.

Most recently a Diocesan Parish Family Challenge has been devised, which was launched by Bishop Edwin Regan in May 2012 to coincide with the 7th World Meeting of Families in Milan.

Every parish has been called to trial at least one of the ideas presented in the Diocesan Parish Family Challenge, the Development Worker being on hand to offer advice and support to parish groups in the development of these initiatives. Over the next year Margaret will seek to ensure the future sustainability of the Project by focusing on the recruitment and training of parish-based volunteer teams.



Photo – Marcin Mazur

The Diocese of Wrexham has benefitted for many years from a small but committed Family Life Commission who have been able to deliver a regular but limited range of support to families in the diocese. The grant has enabled the diocese to employ a dedicated project worker to achieve the Commission's aim of creating, training and sustaining a network of volunteers to deliver on-going support of marriage and family life with the support of their parish priests. After difficulties filling the post, Margaret Hinton, was appointed and began work in 2011.

The first year has been one of testing a variety of strategies in order to identify volunteers in parishes who might go on to receive appropriate training and support. The “Home is a Holy Place” resource was used initially with parishes and schools to raise awareness of the project work. Resulting conversations with clergy and laity led to the creation of a parish resource pack containing information on a variety of organisations which aim to strengthen parish community at a grass roots level – including toddler and parent groups, the Catholic Grandparents Association and the Passionist Family Groups Movement.



Continued

## Diocese of Wrexham Establishing a Sustainable Family Life Ministry



Photo — Marcin Mazur

### Fr Victor's Story

Before the appointment of the Development Worker, the parish of Newtown in mid-Wales, on the boundary of the diocese, had had little contact with the Marriage & Family Life Commission.

On her appointment Father Victor Walter invited Margaret to attend Mass and to discuss with the parish the role of the Commission. He subsequently invited her to join in a parish sponsored walk to raise money for the parish and a homeless charity.

It was to be a family occasion and as the "Home is a Holy Place" resource was not known to the parish, Margaret made a short presentation on each its three key themes at various stages of the walk.

Afterwards Fr Victor was moved to write the following: "My two parishes of Welshpool and Newtown have been fortunate this year to have had the services of Margaret Hinton in the diocese, first to present the MFL Commission's goal of support of families and then to join in parish communal activities, which included presentations on the spirituality of family life.

The presentations were much appreciated and it is strongly felt that her programmes should be endorsed and sponsored as presentations to children in our Catholic schools. It is important that children learn of the deep concern the Church has for her children. Margaret's presentations helped youngsters learn for themselves the sacredness of Christian marriage and family life."



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 Birmingham  
 Cardiff  
 Hallam  
 Leeds  
 Nottingham  
 Middlesbrough  
 Plymouth  
 Shrewsbury  
 Wrexham  
 England & Wales



## Forming Leaders for the Future of Family Ministry in England and Wales

**Rt Rev Bishop John Hine**  
 Chair of the Bishops' Committee for Marriage and Family Life

“It is heartening to see the difference that this study programme has made to those engaged in it. And inevitably this is the way to build up the calibre of those working in this field.”

**A sum of £105,735 was awarded to dioceses across England and Wales to enable nominated diocesan staff or volunteers to undertake Master's studies in Leadership for Family Ministry and Faith Formation.**

**Project Achievements:** a cohort of qualified diocesan personnel, with post-graduate degrees or certificates in leadership for family ministry and faith formation, available to develop new educational programmes in family ministry across England and Wales.

In 2008 CaTEW trustees decided to offer dioceses the opportunity to identify candidates for the MA programme in Leadership for Family Ministry and Faith Formation. The expectation was that newly appointed diocesan staff would experience this programme as an additional support for their work and that dioceses which had not received funding would similarly benefit.

**In 2008 ten students were registered for the MA alongside Elizabeth James from the Diocese of Arundel & Brighton:**



Photo – Marcin Mazur

Phil Butcher (Director of Social Justice Commission, Brentwood), Des Robertson (Pastoral Strategy Implementation Coordinator, Cardiff), Breda Theakston (Diocesan Coordinator of Family Ministry, Leeds), Dominic Belli (volunteer, Menevia), Susan Sanderson (Project Worker, Nottingham), Jillian Wilce (Project Worker, Plymouth), Keith Chappell (Project Worker, Portsmouth), Helen Bassirat (Project Worker, Shrewsbury), Lisette Blanchet Ball (Diocesan Family Ministry, Southwark), Pauline Stanway (Marriage and Family Life Commission, Wrexham).



Photo – Marcin Mazur

The course is structured around three annual summer schools and three online courses per year. In the first year the group flew out to Chicago for classes in

Faith & Family - Personal Perspectives, which was followed by online courses in Marriage & Family Spirituality, Family Ministry & Family Systems, and Faith Development & the Life Cycle. In the second year Dominican University agreed to relocate the summer school on Faith & Family – Social Perspectives to Cambridge. It was followed by online courses in Family Evangelization & Catechesis, Religious Education & Family Life, Sacramentality of Community & its Presence in Marriage & Family Life, and Foundations of Faith & Family in Scripture. In the third year the cohort returned to Chicago for a summer school on Faith & Family - Global Perspectives, which was followed by online courses in Critical Issues in Human Life, and Leadership & Organizational Dynamics. The final module, the Capstone Project, was a course of independent study related to professional practice.

**Hosting the second year summer school in the UK allowed for contacts to be solidified with the theological academy here and for more diocesan staff and volunteers to benefit as auditors during the week of study. These included**

Caroline Dollard (Middlesbrough), Joanne White (Cardiff), Laura Rendell (Hallam), Fr Graham Preston, Ray & Elizabeth Partridge (Southwark) and Mary Clark (East Anglia).

**Classes were held at Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology in Cambridge and the programme accredited so that students on their MA programme in Pastoral Theology could also attend. This made for a much richer learning environment with 30 students taking part:**

13 from the MA in Leadership for Family Ministry and Faith Formation at Dominican University in Chicago, 7 from the MA in Pastoral Theology at Cambridge Theological Federation, 6 auditors from the dioceses plus 6 further day visitors (not including staff).

Continued

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### Lecturers included:

Adrian Thatcher, Janet Soskice, Thomas Knieps-Porte Le Roi, Anna Rowlands, Frances Ward and a team from One Plus One, Joe Mannion and Deirdre Morrod who delivered a Brief Encounters training to the diocesan family ministry workers toward the end of the summer school.

At the graduation ceremony in October 2011 Bishop John Hine, Chair of the Bishops' Committee for Marriage and Family Life, presented Master's degrees to Philip Butcher (Brentwood), Breda Theakston (Leeds), Jillian Wilce (Plymouth) and Pauline Stanway (Wrexham) and Certificates in Leadership for Family Ministry and Faith Formation to Des Robertson (Cardiff), Helen Bassirat (Shrewsbury) and Lisette Blanchet-Ball (Southwark). Lisette and Des subsequently undertook additional studies at Heythrop College, London and were awarded MA's in Pastoral Theology in December 2011. Des has since had his book "A Community of Disciples – learning and working to live and share a life in Christ" accepted for publication by Twenty Third Publications (due Autumn 2012).

In terms of personal and professional development all of the students expressed gratitude for the opportunity of studying through the programme: "It has been challenging, stretching, hard, testing but very fulfilling. It has developed my confidence in this much needed work area and has also led me into looking at further areas of research." "This course has changed my life, given me confidence, aided my thinking, added to my desire to do more and made me more effective at what I do for the Church. It is my hope that the on-going return on your investment in me will encourage you to invest as heavily in others who want to work hard to build up the Church."

**The practical value of the programme is also evident in evaluative feedback:** "Throughout the course I have used ideas within my work, particularly the module

on what it means to have faith (year 1) which has played an integral part in my work. The piece I wrote on faith in scripture has formed the backbone of one course I run with parents.

The Myers Briggs of the Cambridge summer school has informed greatly how I present the offerings within groups, recognizing the differing styles of presentation and ways of prayer that might appeal to one personality type over another. The year 2 module on Family Evangelisation & Catechesis was a 'homecoming' and gave me a forum in which I could give credibility to the work I had already been doing within parish for a number of years previously.

The exercise on 'Where has your Faith been Formed?' plays a leading role in another of the sessions I run with parents. I feel the most significant impact the study has had on my practice is that 'one size never fits all', not even when it's my size. Those around me would say that I speak with a greater confidence in my own thinking with more depth and reference to the Tradition. I communicate certainly with more eloquence."

The completion of this phase of the project represents a tremendous legacy for the Church in England and Wales. Until 2011 there were only three individuals in England and Wales qualified to Master's level in Family Ministry. Two are priests active in parish ministry and one is employed as Marriage & Family Life Project Officer at the Bishops' Conference.

In order to create and sustain future programmes of formation in family ministry it is essential to have a critical mass of potential tutors who are educated to at least MA level. This investment has enabled the creation of such a mass who enjoy additional credibility because they are also practically experienced in delivering family ministry on the ground.



## The Role of the Marriage & Family Life Project Office



Photo – Marcin Mazur

The Project Office role in fulfilling a range of supportive, monitoring and reporting tasks on behalf of the CaTEW Trustees since 2007 has been delivered by the Project Officer, Elizabeth Davies, successive Project Advisers, Barbara Wallace, Chris Robertson and Janet Kent and more recently the Communications Officer, Hannah Moruzzi.

Following the awarding decision, project managers were offered a preliminary workshop in April 2008 to outline CaTEW expectations in terms of reporting and accountability, to share project outlines so that inter-diocesan collaborations might be facilitated and, since most of the project funding covered salary costs, to look at the processes and timelines for appointing staff.

The Project Officer monitored all the appointment processes closely, since the success of projects depended largely on the quality of project workers. She advised on job descriptions and shortlists where requested and joined interview panels in the dioceses of Hallam, Hexham & Newcastle, Leeds, Nottingham, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Shrewsbury, and Wrexham. In September 2008 a workshop on staff supervision was offered to project managers in light of the fact that few had experience of this role.

In November 2008, the newly appointed project workers were gathered for a weekend of induction into the national strategy for support of marriage and family life and the resources that were available to them. The weekend also offered the opportunity to take part in an evangelical family ministry conference, where the project workers underwent a Birkman workshop to increase their self-awareness of their particular aptitudes in the workplace.

After the first set of end-of-year reports on projects were collated and presented to CaTEW Trustees in January 2009, a new part-time post of Projects Adviser was created within the Project Office to provide a more structured support for

project teams. Barbara Wallace held the post for the first year, visiting each of the projects over the summer of 2009 and observing their activities now that they were one year in to their project timeline. These visits enabled a more complete picture of progress to be drawn up and further training needs to be identified.

In October 2009 a workshop on report writing was organised for project managers, to enable them to articulate their work more effectively when advocating at local level for additional funding in the future.

Following the second end-of-year reports, it became clear that the monitoring and support role was becoming increasingly complex and demanding of staff time. The Trustees accepted the need to extend the time available to the Projects Adviser and to create a new role of Communications Officer. Project teams were devoting increasing amounts of energy to project delivery, in the process surfacing many additional family needs that required their attention.

The Project Officer felt that a valuable service could be offered by relieving the teams of some of the burden of communicating their emerging good practices. Moreover a great deal of innovation was taking place that a third party might more easily explore, record and communicate.

The expansion of the support team during the final project phase enabled the enhancement of web-based communication strategies including the national website, facebook and a blog as well as delivery of workshops on fundraising and reflective practice, volunteer recruitment and support, film-making and new media. These were much appreciated. One of the feedbacks in project's closing reports was that more of this kind of support would have been appreciated earlier on.

A number of project workers undertook the recommended further training in

## The Role of the Marriage & Family Life Project Office



Photo – Marcin Mazur

fundraising which is now proving fruitful in supporting some projects to become self-sustaining. Volunteer recruitment strategies are working well in other projects and the film-making workshop has enabled more of the project work to be captured in an immediate and engaging format. Use of skype video-conferencing and telephone conference call facilities have further enabled project teams across dioceses to share information, news and examples of effective practices.

Besides these project-specific support systems, both managers and workers have had opportunities for professional development and personal enrichment through the regional and national meetings and conferences organised by FAMILIAS, the Association for Catholic Diocesan Family Life Ministry, and the Project Office.

Moreover the Project Office has endeavoured to ensure opportunities for most of the project workers to engage at some level with the broader work of the Church. Helen Bassirat served on the steering group developing the Catholics Experiencing Domestic Abuse resources and took part in the national launch of the resource. Susan Sanderson was invited to join the Project Officer in an ecumenical forum, the Toddler Strategy Group.

Joanne White served on a working group with the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service. Caroline Dollard and Jillian Wilce both served on the Passing on the Faith Working Group. Keith Chappell was invited to give a presentation to a colloquium organised by the International Academy for the Study of Marital Spirituality.

For the CaTEW Trustees the Project Office has operated as an early warning system, alerting when projects have run into difficulties and intervening when necessary to keep projects on track. End of year reports have been closely analysed and evaluated and recommendations made on renewal

of grant funding. In a few instances additional conditions have been attached to renewal decisions in order to ensure that project teams remain focussed on their objectives and on project management processes.

Where projects have closed early, the Project Office has made all efforts possible, given the nature of the relationship between CaTEW and the dioceses, to ensure positive outcomes. It is to the credit of the projects that have completed their funded programmes that their short-term outcomes have exceeded their original expectations.



Photo – Marcin Mazur

## Central Support: Key Milestones

### April 2008:

Project Managers met with CaTEW staff at Eccleston Square regarding project reporting and accountability procedures, attended by

**Katrina Avery** (Arundel & Brighton)  
**Therese Gordon** (Birmingham)  
**Anne Ballard** (Cardiff)  
**Fr Mark Hackeson** (East Anglia)  
**Susan Tym** (Hallam)  
**Peter & Pauline Lavery** (Hexham & Newcastle)  
**Breda Theakston** (Leeds)  
**Margaret Smidowicz** (Nottingham)  
**Teresa Cummins** (Plymouth)  
**Nicky Stevens** (Portsmouth)  
**Fr Michael Gannon & Clara Donnelly** (Shrewsbury)  
**Cliff & Mary Howe** (Wrexham)

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### July 2008:

eleven students from England and Wales travelled to Chicago for their first summer residential at Dominican University:

**Liz James** (Arundel & Brighton)  
**Phil Butcher** (Brentwood)  
**Des Robertson** (Cardiff)  
**Breda Theakston** (Leeds)  
**Dominic Belli** (Menevia)  
**Susan Sanderson** (Nottingham)  
**Jillian Wilce** (Plymouth)  
**Keith Chappell** (Portsmouth)  
**Helen Bassirat** (Shrewsbury)  
**Lisette Blanchet Ball** (Southwark) **Pauline Stanway** (Wrexham)

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### August 2009:

The MA summer school is relocated to Cambridge UK and opened up to other diocesan staff.

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### September 2008:

Staff supervision workshop for project managers was held at Archbishop's House, Southwark, delivered by Aminata Kamara, HR Manager at CaTEW, attended by:  
**Fr Mark Hackeson** (East Anglia)

**Susan Tym** (Hallam)  
**Breda Theakston** (Leeds)  
**Jane Cook** (Middlesbrough)  
**Nicky Stevens** (Portsmouth)  
**Cliff and Mary Howe** (Wrexham).

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### November 2008:

An induction weekend for newly-employed project workers took place in Cheltenham, delivered by Project Office staff, experienced diocesan family ministry coordinators and including presentation and workshops at the Engage conference organised by Care for the Family, attended by:

**Joanne Hinds** (Cardiff)  
**Mary Clark** (East Anglia)  
**Laura Rendell** (Hallam)  
**Anne Ruane** (Leeds)  
**Caroline Dollard** (Middlesbrough)  
**Susan Sanderson** (Nottingham)  
**Jillian Wilce** (Plymouth)  
**Keith Chappell** (Portsmouth)  
**Helen Bassirat** (Shrewsbury)

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### May 2009:

Project Support Worker Barbara Wallace is appointed on a two year part-time contract to visit and record project work and mentor project staff.

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**October 2009:** Project Managers meet for workshop on sharing project stories and compiling the annual report to Trustees.

**David Wells** (Plymouth)  
**Peter Lavery** (Hexham & Newcastle) **Breda Theakston** (Leeds)  
**Fr Michael Gannon and Clara Donnelly** (Shrewsbury)  
**Susan Tym** (Hallam)  
**Fr Mark Hackeson** (East Anglia)  
**Mary and Cliff Howe** (Wrexham) take part.

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## Central Support: Key Milestones

### April 2010:

Barbara Wallace resigns to pursue expanding consultancy portfolio.

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### July 2010:

Final summer school of the MA course takes place at Dominican University, Illinois, attended by

**Phil Butcher** (Brentwood)  
**Des Robertson** (Cardiff)  
**Breda Theakston** (Leeds)  
**Jillian Wilce** (Plymouth),  
**Lisette Blanchet Ball** (Southwark)  
**Pauline Stanway** (Wrexham)

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### September 2010:

Chris Robertson and Hannah Moruzzi begin work as Projects Adviser and Communications Officer respectively.

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### November 2010:

Workshops on Fundraising and Reflective Practice offered in two venues: Birmingham and London: attended by

**Fr Jo Quigley** (Birmingham)  
**Anne Ballard & Joanne White** (Cardiff)  
**Mary Clark** (East Anglia)  
**Laura Rendell & Susan Tym** (Hallam) **Breda Theakston** (Leeds)  
**Caroline Dollard & Jane Cook** (Middlesbrough),  
**Susan Sanderson** (Nottingham)  
**Jillian Wilce & David Wells** (Plymouth) **Katja Babei & Nicky Stevens** (Portsmouth)  
**Helen Bassirat & Clara Donnelly** (Shrewsbury)

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### December 2010:

Workshop on Volunteer Recruitment and Support offered in London: attended by

**Katherine Bergin** (Arundel & Brighton)  
**Joanne White** (Cardiff)  
**Anne-Marie Sparrow** (Clifton)

**Claire Warren** (Plymouth)  
**Katja Babei** (Portsmouth)  
**Margaret Hinton** (Wrexham)  
**January 2011:** Janet Kent replaces Chris Robertson as Projects Advisor.

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### April 2011:

Film-making Workshop offered in London: delivered by Loaded Productions, attended by

**Phil Butcher** (Brentwood)  
**Mary & Andrew Clark** (East Anglia)  
**Kit & Caroline Dollard** (Middlesbrough)  
**Edmund Adamus** (Westminster)  
**Elizabeth Davies & Hannah Moruzzi** (Project Office).

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### June 2011:

New Media Workshop offered in London: delivered by Sue Lees Consultancy, attended by

**Phil Butcher** (Brentwood)  
**Joanne White** (Cardiff)  
**Laura Rendell** (Hallam)  
**Breda Theakston** (Leeds)  
**Jillian Wilce** (Plymouth)  
**Jane Cook & Caroline Dollard** (Middlesbrough)  
**Margaret Hinton** (Wrexham)  
**Elizabeth Davies & Hannah Moruzzi** (Project Office)  
**Gail Sainsbury** (Mental Health Development Worker)

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### October 2011:

Graduation ceremony for MA students takes place in Archbishops House, Southwark with Rt Rev John Hine making the awards to:

**Phil Butcher** (Brentwood)  
**Des Robertson** (Cardiff)  
**Breda Theakston** (Leeds)  
**Jillian Wilce** (Plymouth)  
**Helen Bassirat** (Shrewsbury)  
**Lisette Blanchet Ball** (Southwark) **Pauline Stanway** (Wrexham)  
**Liz James** (Arundel & Brighton)



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